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WAR IS MORE MERCIFUL.

Figures Show That the Death Rate In Battle Has Grown Less.

"Six hundred shots a minute!" What a frightful slaughter must accompany the use of these terrible weapons, capable of throwing such a relentless hail of death-dealing projectiles! How destructive of life a modern battle must prove!

Such is the opinion one hears constantly expressed in these days of Maxims and dynamite guns; yet, surprising as it may seem, an investigation into the facts, coming down to the bedrock of figures and statistics, reveals an entirely different state of affairs from that usually imagined. Not only were there more men actually killed in the battles of olden times, but also the percentage of dead was often far greater than in modern engagements. For instance, compare the battle of Marathon, which was fought in the year 391 B. C., and is one of the earliest of which there exists any authentic record, with that of Ha-Shan in the Chino-Japanese war of 1894. In the former conflict, out of a total of some 70,000 troops engaged, nearly 7,000 were left lying on the field, while in the latter only 750 dead were counted, though the opposing forces amounted to more than 23,000 men—a disparity that seems incomprehensible when we remember that throughout the war, the Japanese were provided with all the latest types of guns and ammunition. Some of the battles of ancient times showed a proportion of dead or disabled that cannot be accounted for unless we accept the view that the wars of those days were waged in the spirit of a policy of extermination pure and simple, in the belief that success was not assured until every enemy had been killed, or captured with a view to subsequent torture and execution.

Three memorable battles took place in France shortly after the advent of the Christian Era, and the story of each of them is fraught with intense interest as marking the successive downfalls of three powerful races that strove in turn to obtain a mastery over central and western Europe; every one was a bloody butchery. At Dethmold, A. D. 9, 16,000 Roman troops under Varus, with some 25,000 camp followers, were skilfully surrounded and cut to pieces by a large force of Teutons under Arminius, not one of the unfortunate descendants of Romulus, it is believed, escaping to tell the tale. Four centuries later, at Chalons, Attila, at the head of his villainous multitude of rapacious Huns, met the allied forces of Romans, Franks and Goths, three hundred thousand strong. Attila's strength was estimated at fully 700,000. The night before the great conflict a "skirmish" took place between out-lying pickets in which over 15,000 troops were killed, but the following evening the plain was strewn with the corpses of the slain to the number of close on a quarter of a million! Attila's vast assembly of freebooters fled like chaff before the wind when they met the well-disciplined legions of Rome, but the cost of victory was great, and its immediate value but little appreciated at the time. It is worthy of notice that the number of the slain in this single conflict was far in excess of the total of those killed in battle during the entire civil war of 1861-65, though it has been computed that at least 5,000,000 men carried arms in the course of the struggle between the north and south.

The third of the epoch-making contests was fought at Tours, in the year 732, and resulted in the driving back of the Moors across the Pyrenees, which they had crossed, under the leadership of Abderrahman, with the intention, by one bold stroke, of conquering Frankland and crushing the rising faith of Christianity that was striding rapidly through western Europe. At the head of 400,000 Arab troops Abderrahman arrived at Tours without encountering the slightest opposition, and proceeded to encamp at a little distance from the ancient Roman city. The thoroughly alarmed Christians had meanwhile assembled under the banner of Charles, afterwards Martel, and, with only 30,000 followers, the Champion of Christendom determined to give battle to the Saracen. The cause of the Cross prevailed against the almost overwhelming numbers of the heathen, and the victory was accomplished by the inevitable wholesale destruction of the vanquished. If we can believe the accounts of the monks, the only historians of the period, Abderrahman and 375,000 of his followers were ruthlessly butchered, while the Christian loss was only 1,000 men. It is certain at least, that very few of the invaders ever returned to Spain, whence they had started on their ill-starred expedition.

Instances of the enormous lists of casualties in the battles of the early centuries could be multiplied without difficulty, but sufficient has been said to show that for every man killed in a modern fight, hundreds and even thousands paid the penalty in the mighty hand-to-hand struggles of ancient days, when primitive spears and arrows took the place of the mathematically precise weapons of today. An interesting table can be made showing the percentages of slain in a number of the most important battles of history:

TABLE OF PERCENTAGES.

Date. B.C.	Battle.	Troops Engaged.	Slain.	Per Cent.
490.	Marathon	70,000	6,600	9.5
331.	Arabela	500,000	300,000	60
A. D.				
9.	Dethmold	150,000	50,000	33
451.	Chalons	1,000,000	250,000	25
732.	Tours	450,000	375,000	83*
1066.	Hastings	200,000	75,000	37.5
1346.	Cressy	140,000	35,000	25
1415.	Agincourt	62,000	11,600	18.7
1513.	Flodden Field....	64,000	15,000	23.4
1704.	Blenheim	116,000	17,000	15
1807.	Friedland	250,000	9,000	3.6
1815.	Waterloo	140,000	15,000	10.7
1863.	Gettysburg	160,000	5,662	3.5
1862.	Antietam	120,000	3,994	3
1894.	Ping Yang	60,000	6,000	10
1894.	Port Arthur	36,000	800	2.2
1897.**				
1898.	Atbara	49,000	3,100	6.3
1898.	Manila Bay	5,000	78	1.6

*Information doubtful.
**1897. In the recent Graeco-Turkish war there were only 634 Greek officers and men killed altogether.

The last name on the list brings up thoughts of the great victory in which the illustrious Nelson played such a memorable part. At Trafalgar, in 1805, a British fleet of 33 ships of the line and four frigates (the armored cruisers of modern fleets), engaged a combined French and Spanish battle array of 40 ships and five frigates, and of the conflict which ensued M. Thiers has said that "such a scene of horror at sea had never been witnessed in the memory of man." A single broadside from the Temeraire, a British ship, swept 200 men from the decks of the Redoubtable and hurled them into eternity. This particular French ship numbered 572 dead in a crew of 680 officers and men, only eight officers escaping of the 40 on board. At the close of the terrible struggle, 17 French and Spanish ships had been captured and one blown up, and between killed, wounded, drowned and prisoners the losses of the allies amounted to nearly 7,000 men; on the English ships 1,587 Jack Tars had surrendered their lives. How ludicrous seems the vaunted destructiveness of the modern engines of war, when 14 Spanish ships, in their own harbor and backed up by strong shore batteries, could not make the slightest impression on the gallant Dewey's six large vessels nor even kill a single man! And the recently published results show that the awful destruction that was done among the boats of the Dons was accompanied by the death of but 78 of the sailors and marines that manned them. Similarly, at Atbara, Sir Herbert Kitchener, the Sirdar, repulsed a force of over 40,000 Dervishes, but the Maxims, field guns and repeating rifles were responsible for but a few hundred of the 3,000 Arabs who were slain; the greater part of them fell in the hand-to-hand fighting that took place when the British troops stormed the Arab "zereba" at the point of the bayonet.

There is but one conclusion to be drawn from these figures, and that is, that, instead of becoming more inhuman and destructive as the centuries roll by, war is today a far more merciful game and infinitely less bloody than in the days of flint-lock, crossbow or javelin. Whatever advances have been made in the art of producing huge guns of immense range and power, and of perfecting appliances for rapid and continuous firing, equal, if not greater, strides have been made in the science of affording adequate protection to both garrisons and crews. And moreover, it is ridiculous and impossible to expect that in the heat and excitement of a battle the same accurate results can be obtained which are found in the peace and quiet of target practice. Even the coolest brain cannot be relied on to faithfully compute logarithms amid the screeching of shell and the dull, ear-rending roar of big guns fired in anger. The moral effect of a bursting shell is far in excess of the fear inspired by a whole regiment advancing at the charge.

NOTES ON BOOKS AND AUTHORS

New York, June 22.—If we had no other clear sign of an unusual condition in our public affairs, we might still infer it with confidence from the reappearance among us, at this time, of Mr. Henry Norman of the London Daily Chronicle, who completed his observations and set sail for home last Tuesday. So sure are you latterly to find Mr. Norman wherever there is a special international complication that his very presence has come to be good proof of the conditions that never fails to bring him. We first came to know him generally in this country at the time of the Venezuela difficulty. Recognizing the gravity of the situation he came to Washington in behalf of the Daily Chronicle, and while there set to burrowing curiously into the diplomatic archives, and discovered and dispatched to his newspaper documents that put an entirely new complexion on the controversy over the Venezuelan boundary. By this publication he was thought to have made so important a contribution to the cause of peace that he was specially thanked for it by President Cleveland.

While it was this achievement that made Mr. Norman well known in the United States, he was already no stranger in the country. Though a native of England, he chose to come over to Harvard university to complete his education and graduated there in 1881. Since then he has been coming back from time to time as public occasion arose, and so he has come to know us very well indeed. He knows many other countries and peoples too, for he has been a great traveler. On the continent of Europe, of course, he is about as much at home as in England itself. Even in the southeast corner, down among the semi-orientals, he has recently made a considerable sojourn, traveling especially in all the Balkan states, and he will soon publish a book, entitled "The Near East," recording his observations and experiences there. On the far east he has already published two books, both well known and valuable of their kind, "The Real Japan" and "The Peoples and Politics of the Far East." He writes always from the fullest observation; he spent four years in the far east, visiting every country there, and studying them all closely.

Mr. Norman's strength lies not a little in his good social qualities. He is a patient, intelligent observer, but he does not depend for his information and impressions simply on his own looking about. He gets at men, and makes them talk, and wherever he may be he works into the current of the local daily life. This gives his observations a special practicality and timeliness, and as he has the gift of expressing them in a vigorous, fluent style, it is always, not only well worth while, but decidedly entertaining to read what he writes, and editors are always eager for his contributions. He is especially interesting now, at least to Americans, because the subject that particularly engages him is the effect our foreign war is having upon us and the likelihood of its resulting in an alliance with England, as he himself thinks it will. He has just completed an article on this subject for the July number of McClure's Magazine. He is now about 40 years of age, and, with his native alertness and intelligence, his careful education, his large acquaintance and his wide observation, he is about the ablest man for his work whom I know of anywhere.

I made mention some weeks ago, in this correspondence, of Lieutenant Jasper Brady, whose forthcoming stories of the life of a telegraph operator I forecast would prove good reading. This is the same man of whom you have been reading lately, under the designation of "Captain" Brady, applying the government censor's blue pencil rigorously on the press dispatches down at Key West. When he got to the front his long experience as a telegraph operator, before he entered the army, and his literary tendencies indicated him as the proper man to supervise the press dispatches, and see that no important war secrets were given to the public. Therefore, he began to exercise the editorial function on a larger scale than, perhaps, any other man in the country, and, in order that his rank might comport with the deadliness of his office, he was made a captain. The step from authorship to editorship has always been a short one, and it is no surprise that Captain Brady should have taken it; but I hope he'll retrieve it, sooner or later, for he must be all the time now laying in a rare stock of material for stories.

Literary centers and gathering points are of a remarkably transitory character in this country. They may be so in all countries for aught I know; but here, certainly, you scarcely learn that they are before you become well aware that they are not. Here in New York there is always a new hotel or restaurant coming forward under the legend that it is the place most resorted to by men and women who write, and then, just when the hero-worshipping outsider begins to haunt its office and doorway in the hope of getting a sight of some of the people upon whom the literary inspiration has descended, he comes into the chilling knowledge that, while this used to be the place where the authors came, it is the place no longer. Thus a little French hotel in Ninth street has attracted at one time and another not a few transient patrons, because it was reputed to be a favorite dining place with Thomas Janvier, Mr. Howells, and others of their kind. And a little French restaurant over on Washington square has enjoyed like strokes of patronage under a similar repute. But in neither, I fancy, has the curious visitor often found a reward to his mind; and if you went to either today in the hope of literary celebrities, you would find something quite different.

This mutability of the literary center is not to be imputed wholly to the fickleness of the literary stomach. No doubt the writer, like any other man, finds any hotel or restaurant deteriorate on acquaintance and yields to the inexorable disposition to move on, in the hope that the next place will not prove as unsatisfactory as the last. But, after all, the fundamental reason for there being no abidingness in the literary center is that, in reality, it has not existed in the earlier and more Bohemian days, but there is no such thing now. Even the Authors club, which exists in name and has itself very comfortably housed in the Carnegie building, at Seventh avenue and Fifty-sixth street, is after all, rather a lifeless and incoherent association. Authors as such have in New York next to no social relations with each other. They form their social connections largely irrespective of their calling, and the fact that a man writes carries no implication that he has mainly writers for his friends. As for Bohemia, it does not exist, except as a few of the youngsters, for a brief season, play at being Bohemians. There are struggling writers in plenty, and they live often in very strange places and in very odd ways, but there is none of the romance of Bohemia to enliven their environment to them.

Among the younger writers none has shown a more heroic persistance than Mr. Clinton Ross. He came out of Yale college a few years ago with the prospect before him of being able to live his life very much as he chose. But his outlook suddenly changed, and he found himself under the new necessity of making his own living. There was but one thing that he really cared to do, and that was to write. He had already experimented somewhat in it in an amateurish way; he had even published a small book or two—at his own expense. So writing being, above all else, the thing he desired to do, he decided it should be the thing he would do, and he buckled to it. No man could have worked harder. It was solely as a story writer that Mr. Ross proposed to live, but story writing, as a livelihood, everybody agrees is simply impossible. One can count it up for one's self; the calculation is easy, ten acceptable stories a year, which is more by four or five than any man, however gifted, can possibly write, at $50 each, which is more than any unknown author can hope to get except in his "luckiest hits." Despite the calculation, however, Mr. Ross somehow did it. Still, even he hasn't depended on the short story exclusively. He tried his hand pretty early in the struggle on a short novel, and he has now written a number and placed them rather well. He was further fortunate in that his bent enabled him to take advantage of the tide that has lately set in for historical stories. He has made good use in this way of our own home history, especially of the revolutionary period.

Mr. Ross is unmarried, and leads a cheerful bachelor life, usually housing himself in the busiest part of the city. While he is capable of expending as much pains on his work as anybody, he is also capable of very rapid production. He is an approachable, genial man, one whom you feel it cheerful to meet, and one who combines some commercial gifts with his literary, so that he is not only able to write, but to sell what he writes.

I see it announced that Mr. Leslie Stephen is preparing a new volume of his essays for the press, and this moves me to think what a difference there is in the fortunes of essayists. It must be all of 20 years now since an exceptionally alert reader here and there became aware—usually by the merest chance—that in a small volume then lately put out, under the title of "Hours in a Library," there was a rare and delightful book. Lowell, for one, found it out, and there is somewhere in his published correspondence an expression of his pleasure in it. He had, indeed, to help him to the discovery a previous personal acquaintance with the author, but, no doubt, he would have come upon it, sooner or later, without so direct a provocation, for it was just the sort of book he liked—a half biographical, half critical "meditation" on the most interesting of the English worthies of 18th century literature—and a good reader is led by a kind of instinct almost infallible to the thing he likes. Yet in all these 20 years I have heard that book mentioned only by one person, and he was a man who recommended and loaned it to me. I think I have never seen a copy of it but the one I read. And this, I take it, fairly illustrates the kind and degree of acceptance attained by Mr. Leslie Stephen throughout his career. Meanwhile men of not one-half of his learning, and even less of his penetration and breadth and liberality of mind, and of no more, if as much power of style, have secured the widest reading.

Mrs. Helen Watterson Moody, whose book, "The Unquiet Sex," is just now provocative of not a little wholesome mental activity, is one of the most interesting literary women of New York to know. As her book discloses, she has exceptional intellectual alertness and brightness, and she shows this quite as abundantly and attractively in her conversation as in her writing. She is of Ohio birth and education, is related to Henry Watterson, the editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal, and was for some time employed on the New York Evening Sun, where she created a department that made her name of Helen Watterson well known and added not a little to the popularity of the paper. Among her fellow workers on the Sun was the present editor of the "Book Buyer." On acquaintance she found him, as most who know him do find him, a man to be fond of, and consequently became his wife, and thus added the "Moody" to her name. She holds no editorial position now, and undertakes to write only as the inspiration urges her. She is a woman of much force of character, as well as brightness of mind, and is a distinct influence in her circle of acquaintance.

E. C. MARTIN.